

Chapter 2

Duties, Responsibilities and Authority of the NCO



Do the right thing – always

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For more information on Duties, Responsibilities and Authority of the NCO see AR 600-20, “Army Command Policy,” DA PAM 600-25, “US Army NCO Professional Development Guide” and FM 6-22 (22-100), *Army Leadership*.

For more information on inspections see FM 22-5, *Drill and Ceremonies* and AR 1-201, “Army Inspection Policy.”

ASSUMING A LEADERSHIP POSITION

2-1. Assuming a leadership position is one of the most important leadership situations you'll face as an NCO. Everything discussed in FM 6-22 (22-100) about what you must **BE, KNOW and DO** is relevant to your success of assuming a leadership position.

2-2. When assuming a leadership position, there are some things to think about and learn as you establish your goals in the organization. Figure 2-1 will assist you in achieving your goals.

- Determine what your organization expects of you.
- Determine who your immediate leader is and what they expect of you.
- Determine the level of competence and the strengths and weaknesses of your soldiers.
- Identify the key people outside of your organization whose willing support you need to accomplish the mission.

Figure 2-1. Tasks to Assume a Leadership Position

2-3. You should also talk to your leaders, peers and key people such as the chaplain and the sergeant major. Seek clear answers to the questions in Figure 2-2.

- What is the organization's mission?
- How does this mission fit in with the mission of the next higher organization?
- What are the standards the organization must meet?
- What resources are available to help the organization accomplish the mission?
- What is the current state of morale?
- Who reports directly to you?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of your key subordinates and the unit?
- Who are the key people outside the organization who support mission accomplishment? (What are their strengths and weaknesses?)
- When and what do you talk to your soldiers about?

Figure 2-2. Questions When Assuming a Leadership Position

2-4. Be sure to ask these questions at the right time, of the right person and in the best way. The answers to these questions and others you may have will help you to correctly assess the situation and select the right leadership style.

DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITY

2-5. As a noncommissioned officer, you have duties, responsibilities and authority. Do you know the meaning of duties, responsibilities and authority?

DUTY

2-6. A duty is something you must do by virtue of your position and is a legal or moral obligation. For example, it is the supply sergeant's duty to issue equipment and keep records of the unit's supplies. It is the first sergeant's duty to hold formations, instruct platoon sergeants and assist the commander in supervising unit operations. It is the duty of the squad/section/team leader to account for his soldiers and ensure that they receive necessary instructions and are properly trained to perform their jobs.

2-7. A noncommissioned officer's duties are numerous and must be taken seriously. An NCO's duty includes taking care of soldiers, which is your priority. Corporals and sergeants do this by developing a genuine concern for their soldiers' well-being. Leaders must know and understand their soldiers well enough to train them as individuals and teams to operate proficiently. This will give them confidence in their ability to perform well under the difficult and demanding conditions of battle. Individual training is the principle duty and responsibility of NCOs. No one in the Army has more to do with training soldiers than NCOs. Well trained soldiers will likely succeed and survive on the battlefield. Well trained soldiers properly do the tasks their NCOs give them. A good leader executes the boss's decisions with energy and enthusiasm; looking at their leader, soldiers will believe the leader thinks it's absolutely the best possible solution.

"We don't need 'leaders' who stay warm on cold days... while their men freeze on the grenade ranges. If they get cold, the leader ought to get just as cold. And when he marches back to the barracks with them after that kind of day, they know he is one of them."

Drill Sergeant Karl Baccene

2-8. There may be situations you must think carefully about what you're told to do. For example, duty requires that you refuse to obey illegal orders. This is not a privilege you can claim, but a duty you must perform. You have no choice but to do what's ethically and legally correct. Making the right choice and acting on it when faced with an ethical question can be difficult. Sometimes, it means standing your ground and telling your supervisor you think their wrong. If you think an order is illegal, first be sure that you understand both the details of the order and its original intent. Seek clarification from the person who gave the order. This takes moral courage, but the question will be straightforward: Did you really mean for me to... steal the part... submit a false report... shoot the prisoners?

"Moral courage, to me, is much more demanding than physical courage."

SMA Leon L. Van Autreve

2-9. If the question is complex and time permits, seek advice from legal assistance. However, if you must decide immediately, as in the heat of combat, make the best judgment possible based on the Army values and attributes, your experience and your previous study and reflection. You take a risk when you disobey what you perceive to be an illegal order. Talk to your superiors, particularly those who have done what you aspire to do or what you think you'll be called on to do; providing counsel of this sort is an important part of leadership. Obviously, you need to make time to do this before you're faced with a tough call. This could possibly be the most difficult decision you'll ever make, but that's what leaders do.

2-10. Noncommissioned officers have three types of duties: specified duties, directed duties and implied duties.

2-11. **Specified duties** are those related to jobs and positions. Directives such as Army regulations, Department of the Army (DA) general orders, the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), soldier's manuals, Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) publications and MOS job descriptions specify the duties. For example, AR 600-20 says that NCOs must ensure that their soldiers get proper individual training and maintain personal appearance and cleanliness.

2-12. **Directed duties** are not specified as part of a job position or MOS or other directive. A superior gives them orally or in writing. Directed duties include being in charge of quarters (CQ) or serving as sergeant of the guard, staff duty officer, company training NCO and NBC NCO, where these duties are not found in the unit's organization charts.

2-13. **Implied duties** often support specified duties, but in some cases they may not be related to the MOS job position. These duties may not be written but implied in the instructions. They're duties that improve the quality of the job and help keep the unit functioning at an optimum level. In most cases, these duties depend on individual initiative. They improve the work environment and motivate soldiers to perform because they want to, not because they have to. For example, while not specifically directed to do so, you hold in-ranks inspections daily to ensure your soldiers' appearance and equipment are up to standards.

RESPONSIBILITY

2-14. Responsibility is being accountable for what you do or fail to do. NCOs are responsible to fulfill not only their individual duties, but also to ensure their teams and units are successful. Any duty, because of the position you hold in the unit, includes a responsibility to execute that duty. As an NCO, you

are accountable for your personal conduct and that of your soldiers. Also, each soldier is individually responsible for his own personal conduct and that responsibility cannot be delegated. A soldier is accountable for his actions to fellow soldiers, leaders, unit and the US Army.

2-15. As a leader you must ensure that your soldiers clearly understand their responsibilities as members of the team and as representative of the Army. Commanders set overall policies and standards, but all leaders must provide the guidance, resources, assistance and supervision necessary for soldiers to perform their duties. Mission accomplishment demands that officers and NCOs work together to advise, assist and learn from each other. Responsibilities fall into two categories: command and individual.

2-16. **Command responsibility** refers to collective or organizational accountability and includes how well the unit performs their missions. For example, a company commander is responsible for all the tasks and missions assigned to the company; his superiors hold him accountable for completing them. Commanders give military leaders the responsibility for what their sections, units, or organizations do or fail to do. NCOs are therefore responsible to fulfill not only their individual duties, but also to ensure that their team and unit are successful. The amount of responsibility delegated to you depends on your mission, the position you hold and your own willingness to accept responsibility.

2-17. One point you need to get straight is that although a list of duties can be drawn up describing what is expected of you, it will not tell you how to do your job. For example, one of an NCO's duties is to enforce standards of military appearance. This means you are responsible for correcting soldiers who wear the uniform improperly and for teaching them the correct standards of appearance. It also means that you should inspect for proper and serviceability, clothing and equipment of your soldiers. Remember that you must set the example first and your soldiers will follow in your footsteps.

"Rank is a badge of responsibility..."

DA Pam 360-1 (1957)

2-18. **Individual responsibility** as a noncommissioned officer means you are accountable for your personal conduct. Soldiers in the Army have their own responsibilities. For example, if you write a check at the commissary, it is your responsibility to have sufficient funds in the bank account to cover the check. Individual responsibility cannot be delegated; it belongs to the soldier that wrote the check. Soldiers are accountable for their actions, to their fellow soldiers, to their leaders, to their unit and to the United States Army. As a leader you must ensure that your soldiers understand clearly their responsibilities as members of the team and as representatives of the Army.

"A leader does not 'choose' the best or most opportune time in which to lead. A good leader takes the challenge whenever and wherever it presents itself and does the best he or she can."

SMA Richard A. Kidd

AUTHORITY

2-19. As a noncommissioned officer, you must know what authority you have and where it comes from. You are also expected to use good judgment when exercising your authority.

2-20. Authority is defined as the right to direct soldiers to do certain things. Authority is the legitimate power of leaders to direct soldiers or to take action within the scope of their position. Military authority begins with the Constitution, which divides it between Congress and the President. The President, as commander in chief, commands the armed forces, including the Army. The authority from the Commander-in-Chief extends through the chain of command, with the assistance of the NCO support channel, to the squad, section or team leader who then directs and supervises the actions of individual soldiers. When you say, "PFC Lee, you and PFC Johnson start filling sandbags; SPC Garcia and SPC Smith will provide security from that hill," you are turning into action the orders of the entire chain of command.

2-21. In the Army there are two basic types of authority: command authority and general military authority.

2-22. **Command authority** is the authority leaders have over soldiers by virtue of rank or assignment. Command authority originates with the President and may be supplemented by law or regulation. Even though it is called "command" authority, it is not limited to officers – you have command authority inherent in your leadership position as a tank commander or team leader, for example. Noncommissioned officers' command authority is inherent with the job by virtue of position to direct or control soldiers.

"It takes guts for an NCO to use inherent authority and responsibility in training, maintaining, leading, and caring for soldiers."

SMA Glen E. Morrell

2-23. Leading soldiers includes the authority to organize, direct and control your assigned soldiers so that they accomplish assigned missions. It also includes authority to use assigned equipment and resources to accomplish your missions. Remember that this only applies to soldiers and facilities in your unit. For example, if the platoon sergeant of first platoon goes on leave and a squad leader is put in charge, that squad leader has command authority over only first platoon, until he is relieved from the responsibility. The soldiers in

first platoon will obey the squad leader's orders due to his position. However, the squad leader does not have command authority over another platoon.

"As a leader... you are not given authority, status and position as a personal reward to enjoy in comfort. You are given them so that you may be of greater service to your subordinates, your unit and your country."

FM 22-100, *Army Leadership* (1983)

2-24. **General military authority** is authority extended to all soldiers to take action and act in the absence of a unit leader or other designated authority. It originates in oaths of office, law, rank structure, traditions and regulations. This broad-based authority also allows leaders to take appropriate corrective actions whenever a member of any armed service, anywhere, commits an act involving a breach of good order or discipline. For example, if you see soldiers in a brawl, you have the general military authority (and the obligation) to stop the fight. This authority applies even if none of the soldiers are in your unit.

2-25. General military authority exists whether you are on duty or not, in uniform or in civilian attire and regardless of location. For example, you are off duty, in civilian clothes and in the PX and you see a soldier in uniform with his headgear raised up and trousers unbloused. You stop the soldier immediately, identify yourself and ensure the soldier understands and makes the necessary corrections. If he refuses, saying you don't have the authority to tell him what to do because he's not in your NCO support channel, *the soldier is wrong.*

2-26. You as an NCO have both general military authority and the duty to enforce standards as outlined in AR 670-1. Your authority to enforce those regulations is specified in AR 600-20 and if you neglect your duty, you can be held accountable. If the soldier refuses to obey you, what can you do? For starters, you can explain that you have authority regardless of your location, your unit, or whether you are in uniform or civilian attire. You may decide to settle for the soldier's name and unit. If so, a phone call to his first sergeant should be more than enough to ensure that such an incident does not recur.

"Speak with your own voice."

CSM Clifford R. West

2-27. **Delegation of authority.** Just as Congress and the President cannot participate in every aspect of the armed forces operations, most leaders cannot handle every action directly. To meet the organization's goals, officers delegate authority to NCOs in the NCO Support Channel who, in turn, may further delegate that authority. Unless restricted by law, regulation, or a superior, leaders may delegate any or all of their authority to their subordinate leaders. However, such delegation must fall within the leader's scope of authority. Leaders cannot delegate authority they do not have and subordinate

leaders may not assume authority that superiors do not have, cannot delegate, or have retained. The task or duty to be performed limits the authority of the leader to whom it is assigned.

2-28. Both command and general military authority originate in the Constitution and Congress has further defined them in law. More explicit sources are Army Regulations, the Manual for Courts Martial (MCM) and the chain of command/NCO support channel.

2-29. You don't need to read or remember all Army Regulations (ARs) but study those that pertain to your job. If necessary, ask other NCOs to help you find out what regulations pertain to you, where they can be found and how to interpret them. Start with AR 600-20. It covers enlisted soldiers' and noncommissioned officers' authority and responsibilities.

2-30. The Manual for Courts Martial (MCM, 2002) describes legal aspects of the authority of the noncommissioned officer. It states in part that, "All commissioned officers, warrant officers and noncommissioned officers are authorized to stop quarrels, frays and disorders among persons subject to the code...." Severe penalties are imposed for violations such as disrespect, insubordination, or assault. No one expects you to be an expert on military law, but as a noncommissioned officer you should know the definition of these words and be able to explain them to your soldiers. Your legal clerk can be a good source of information.

Authority of the NCO is part of the equation in military discipline.

2-31. Your authority also stems from the combination of the chain of command and the NCO support channel. Orders and policies that pass through the chain of command or the NCO support channel automatically provide the authority necessary to get the job done. With such broad authority given to all commissioned officers and noncommissioned officers, the responsibility to use mature, sound judgment is critical. The chain of command backs up the NCO support channel by legally punishing those who challenge the NCO's authority. But it does so only if the noncommissioned officer's actions and orders are sound, intelligent and based on proper authority. To be a good leader, you should learn what types of authority you have and where it comes from. Whenever in doubt, ask. Once you're confident that you know the extent of your authority, use sound judgment in applying it. Then you will be a leader respected by both your soldiers and superiors.

INSPECTIONS AND CORRECTIONS

2-32. Why do we have inspections? From long experience, the Army has found that some soldiers, if allowed to, will become careless and lax in the

performance of minor barrack duties in their unit. They become accustomed to conditions in their immediate surroundings and overlook minor deficiencies. Should a soldier fall below the Army standard of performance, you can be assured that someone will notice those deficiencies immediately.



2-33. Your superiors will order inspections to see that soldiers have all the equipment and clothing issued to them and that it is serviceable. Inspections serve this practical purpose; they are not harassment. You will probably agree that inspections often correct small problems before they become big problems. Sharp appearance, efficient performance and excellent maintenance are important considerations that affect you directly. They are the earmarks of a good organization and one you should be a proud member of. First line leaders should inspect their soldiers daily and should regularly check soldiers' rooms in the barracks. First line leaders should also make arrangements with soldiers who live in quarters (on or off post) to ensure the soldier maintains a healthy and safe environment for himself and his family.

TYPES OF INSPECTIONS

2-34. There are two categories of inspections for determining the status of individual soldiers and their equipment: in-ranks and in-quarters. An in-ranks

inspection is of personnel and equipment in a unit formation. The leader examines each soldier individually, noticing their general appearance and the condition of their clothing and equipment. When inspecting crew-served weapons and vehicles, the personnel are normally positioned to the rear of the formation with the operators standing by their vehicle or weapon. Leaders may conduct an in-quarters (barracks) inspection to include personal appearance, individual weapons, field equipment, displays, maintenance and sanitary conditions. Organizations will have inspection programs that help determine the status and mission readiness of the unit and its components. These include Command Inspections, Staff Inspections and Inspector General Inspections.

- The training, instruction, or correction given to a soldier to correct deficiencies must be directly related to the deficiency.
- Orient the corrective action to improving the soldier's performance in their problem area.
- You may take corrective measures after normal duty hours. Such measures assume the nature of the training or instruction, not punishment.
- Corrective training should continue only until the training deficiency is overcome.
- All levels of command should take care to ensure that training and instruction are not used in an oppressive manner to evade the procedural safeguards in imposing nonjudicial punishment.
- Do not make notes in soldiers' official records of deficiencies satisfactorily corrected by means of training and instruction.

Figure 2-3. On-the-Spot Correction Guidelines

2-35. **On-the-Spot Corrections.** One of the most effective administrative corrective measures is on-the-spot correction. Use this tool for making the quickest and often most effective corrections to deficiencies in training or standards. Generally there is one of two reasons a soldier requires an on-the-spot correction. Either the soldier you are correcting does not know what the standard is or does not care what the standard is. If the soldier was aware of the standard but chose not to adhere to it, this may indicate a larger problem that his chain of command should address. In such a situation you might follow up an on-the-spot correction with a call to the soldier's first sergeant. Figure 2-3 provides guidelines on making an on-the-spot correction.

SGT Park and the On-the-Spot Correction

As SGT Park left the Dining Facility after breakfast one morning, he stopped to buy a paper from a newspaper machine nearby. Just as he let go of the machine door, letting it slam shut, a soldier (who was about 30 feet away) shouted, "Hey! Hold it Open!" When the soldier saw SGT Park had let it close he said, "Thanks a lot, pal."

SGT Park called the soldier over, identified himself and his unit and asked if the soldier knew the proper way to address an NCO. The soldier said he hadn't realized that SGT Park was an NCO and would have addressed him by his rank if he had. Then SGT Park asked him if he was aware that taking a newspaper without paying for it was theft. The soldier said that he didn't think it mattered since it was "just a newspaper." SGT Park told him that it did matter, just as proper execution of seemingly small, unimportant tasks matters to the Army as a whole. The soldier, who was at parade rest and respectful throughout the conversation, nodded and said, "Alright, sergeant."

SGT Park ended the on-the-spot correction by asking the soldier to think about what integrity meant and whether a soldier's honesty is important to the Army.

2-36. Keeping a soldier on track is the key element in solving performance problems. Motivated soldiers keep the group functioning, training productive and ultimately, accomplish the training objectives and most importantly the mission. Some leaders believe that soldiers work as expected simply because that is their job. That may be true. But soldiers and leaders need a simple pat on back once in a while, for a job well done. You need to praise your soldiers and let them know that you care about the job they are doing and you are glad they are part of the team. Soldiers not performing to standard need correction; use the on-the-spot correction tool. Even after making an on-the-spot correction additional training may be necessary. Figure 2-4 shows the steps in making an on-the-spot correction.

- Correct the soldier.
- Attack the performance, never the person.
- Give one correction at a time. Do not dump.
- Don't keep bringing it up — when the correction is over, it is over.

Figure 2-4. On-the-Spot Correction Steps

2-37. More often than not, your soldiers do good things that deserve a pat on the back. In the same way you do on-the-spot corrections (but obviously for different reasons), praise your soldiers' good work by telling them the specific action or result observed, why it was good and encourage the soldier to continue. Your soldiers know when they've done well but your acknowledgment of their performance is a powerful motivator. It reinforces standards, builds soldiers' pride and lets them know you notice the hard work they do. It is also another indicator that you care about them.

"Correct errors in the use of judgment and initiative in such a way as to encourage the individual."

FM 22-10, *Leadership* (1951)

2-38. **On-the-Spot Inspections.** Making an informal, unscheduled check of equipment, soldiers or quarters is called an on-the-spot inspection. Stopping to check the tag on a fire extinguisher as you walk through a maintenance bay is an example of an on-the-spot inspection. Another example is checking the condition of the trash dumpster area in back of the orderly room. For any inspection, the steps are the same.

- Preparation.
- Conduct.
- Follow-up.

2-39. **PCC/PCI.** Pre-combat checks (PCCs) / Pre-combat inspections (PCIs) and Pre-execution checks are key to ensuring leaders, trainers and soldiers are adequately prepared to execute operations and training to Army standard. PCC/ PCIs are the bridge between pre-execution checks and execution of training. They are also detailed final checks that all units conduct before and during execution of training and combat operations. Conduct PCC/PCIs at the beginning of each event or exercise as part of troop leading procedures to check personnel, equipment, vehicles and mission knowledge. The chain of command is responsible for developing, validating and verifying all PCC/PCIs. Pre-execution checks ensure that all planning and prerequisite training (soldier, leader and collective) are complete prior to the execution of training. They systematically prepare soldiers, trainers and resources to ensure training execution starts properly. Pre-execution checks provide the attention to detail needed to use resources efficiently.

2-40. You are the key to inspections, checking soldier and unit readiness in personal hygiene and appearance, weapons, field equipment, displays and sanitary conditions. Inspections must be done regularly to help reinforce standards and instill discipline. Regular, impartial inspections of important areas develop confidence, teamwork and soldiers' pride in themselves and their equipment.

NONCOMMISSIONED, COMMISSIONED AND WARRANT OFFICER RELATIONSHIPS

2-41. An important part of your role as an NCO is how you relate to commissioned officers. To develop this working relationship, NCOs and officers must know the similarities of their respective duties and responsibilities.

2-42. Commissioned officers hold a commission from the President of the United States, which authorizes them to act as the President's representative in certain military matters. Laws, regulations, policies and customs limit the duties and responsibilities of commissioned officers, like NCOs and other government officials. As the President's representatives, commissioned

officers carry out the orders of the Commander in Chief as they are handed down through the chain of command. In carrying out orders, commissioned officers get considerable help, advice and assistance from NCOs. Both commissioned officers and NCOs share the same goal – accomplish the unit’s mission. Figure 2-5 lists general duties of commissioned officers.

<p style="text-align: center;">The Commissioned Officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commands, establishes policy, plans and programs the work of the Army.• Concentrates on collective training, which will enable the unit to accomplish its mission.• Is primarily involved with unit operations, training and related activities.• Concentrates on unit effectiveness and unit readiness.• Pays particular attention to the standards of performance, training and professional development of officers as well as NCOs.• Creates conditions – makes the time and other resources available – so the NCO can do the Job.• Supports the NCO.

Figure 2-5. General Duties of Commissioned Officers

2-43. Warrant officers are highly specialized, single-tracked specialty officers who receive their authority from the Secretary of the Army upon their initial appointment. However, Title 10 USC authorizes the commissioning of Warrant Officers (WO1) upon promotion to Chief Warrant Officer (CW2). These commissioned warrant officers are direct representatives of the President of the United States. They derive their authority from the same source as commissioned officers but remain specialists, in contrast to commissioned officers who are generalists. Figure 2-6 lists general duties of warrant officers.

The Warrant Officer

- Provides quality advice, counsel and solutions to support the command.
- Executes policy and manages the Army's system.
- Commands special-purpose units and tasks-organized operational elements.
- Focuses on collective, leader and individual training.
- Operates, maintains, administers and manages the Army's equipment, support activities and technical system.
- Concentrates on unit effectiveness and readiness.
- Supports the NCO.

Figure 2-6. General Duties of Warrant Officers

2-44. Warrant officers can and do command detachments, units, activities and vessels as well as lead, coach, train and counsel soldiers. As leaders and technical/tactical experts, warrant officers provide valuable skills, guidance and expertise to commanders and organizations in their particular field.

2-45. Warrant officers provide mentorship, leadership and training to NCOs to support technical, tactical and mission-related tasks. The relationship between the warrant officer and NCO is similar to the commissioned officer. They rely on each other for help, advice and assistance to accomplish the unit's mission.

The Noncommissioned Officer

- Conducts the daily business of the Army within established orders, directives and policies.
- Focuses on individual training, which develops the capability to accomplish the mission.
- Primarily involved with training and leading soldiers and teams.
- Ensures each subordinate team, NCO and soldier are prepared to function as a effective unit and each team member is well trained, highly motivated, ready and functioning.
- Concentrates on standards of performance, training and professional development of NCOs and enlisted soldiers.
- Follows orders of officers and NCOs in the support channel.
- Gets the job done.

Figure 2-7. General Duties of Noncommissioned Officers

2-46. Noncommissioned officers, the backbone of the Army, train, lead and take care of enlisted soldiers. They receive their authority from their oaths of

office, law, rank structure, duty position, traditions and regulations. This authority allows them to direct soldiers, take actions required to accomplish the mission and enforce good order and discipline. NCOs represent officer and sometimes DA civilian leaders. They ensure their soldiers, along with their personal equipment, are prepared to function as an effective unit and team members. While commissioned officers command, establish policy and manage resources, NCOs conduct the Army's daily business. Figure 2-7 lists general duties of NCOs.

SPECIAL MENTION

2-47. Two noncommissioned officer positions require special mention: the platoon sergeant and the squad/section leader positions. The platoon sergeant's position is unique because the platoon sergeant must be ready to assume the responsibilities of the platoon leader — an officer. The platoon sergeant takes command in the platoon leader's absence. Therefore, the platoon sergeant's tasks are essentially the same as those of the platoon leader. As acting platoon leader, the platoon sergeant assumes the same responsibilities as the commissioned officer. The platoon leader and platoon sergeant must understand each other; the platoon sergeant must be able to move in and out of the officer's area of responsibility to prepare to replace the platoon leader if necessary. In many cases, the platoon sergeant has much more experience than the lieutenant does; one important task is to teach and advise the lieutenant. The platoon needs both the officer and the sergeant and they must know each other without thinking.

There is naturally some overlap of duties and responsibilities between officers and NCOs. This is a necessary and desirable outcome of close cooperation and should be a source of strength for a unit rather than the cause of friction.

2-48. The second unique position is the squad, section or team leader. Possibly the only NCO in the squad, section or team, he is **the** leader of his soldiers. This NCO is the first link in both the NCO support channel and chain of command. They take their orders from both the platoon sergeant and platoon leader. This is another reason why the platoon sergeant and platoon leader must know what each other are doing. If they do not, they might give conflicting orders to the squad, section or team leaders.

2-49. Noncommissioned, commissioned and warrant officers depend on each other and work together to accomplish the mission of the unit. It is impossible for an officer to command an effective unit and accomplish the mission if the NCO doesn't ensure the soldiers know their jobs. Commissioned officers, warrant officers and NCOs must advise, assist and learn from each other.

Although the officer is held accountable for all that the unit does or fails to do, only by working together with the NCO can he assure the job will get accomplished.

THE NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER SUPPORT CHANNEL

2-50. The NCO support channel is subordinate to and supportive of the chain of command. The NCO support channel is not an independent channel. It is incumbent on the users of this channel to ensure that the chain of command is kept informed of actions implemented through the NCO support channel and to eliminate the possibility of the NCO support channel operating outside of command policy and directives. Problems should be brought to the attention of the chain of command and resolved through a coordinated effort. Since the NCO support channel should be operating in accordance with established command policy and directives, conflicts should be minimal and easily resolved.

2-51. Prior to 1977 the NCO support channel was regarded as informal. However, AR 600-20 formalized the NCO support channel and expanded its functions in December 1976. The NCO support channel is now directive in nature within established policies and orders. Because of this, commanders are seeing the senior NCO more actively participating in all unit activities and tasks. The NCO support channel (leadership chain) parallels and reinforces the chain of command. NCO leaders work with and support the commissioned and warrant officers of their chain of command.

2-52. In units at the battalion level and higher, the NCO support channel is the communication and supervision that begins with the command sergeant major (CSM), extends through first sergeants and platoon sergeants and ends with section chiefs, squad leaders, or team leaders. ***In addition to passing information, this channel is used for executing the commander's orders and getting routine, but important, jobs done.*** Most often it is used to put into effect policies and procedures and to enforce standards of performance, training, appearance and conduct.

2-53. The connection between the chain of command and the NCO support channel is the senior NCO. Commanders issue orders through the chain of command, but senior NCOs must know and understand the orders to issue effective implementing instructions through the NCO support channel. Although the first sergeant and command sergeants major are not part of the formal chain of command, leaders should consult them on individual soldier matters.

2-54. Successful officers have a good leader and NCO relationship with their first sergeants and command sergeants major. This leaves the commander free

to plan, make decisions and program future training and operations. The need for such a relationship applies to platoon leaders and platoon sergeants as well as to staff officers and NCOs. Senior NCOs have extensive experience in successfully completing missions and dealing with enlisted soldier issues. Also, senior NCOs can monitor organizational activities at all levels, take corrective action to keep the organization within the boundaries of the commander's intent, or report situations that require the attention of the officer leadership. ***Regardless of where the information or task begins – in the chain of command or in the NCO support channel – keep the counterpart informed.*** A positive relationship between officers and NCOs creates conditions for success.

2-55. The NCO support channel assists the chain of command in accomplishing the following:

- Transmitting, instilling and ensuring the efficacy of the professional Army ethic.
- Planning and conducting the day-to-day unit operations within prescribed policies and directives.
- Training enlisted soldiers in their MOS as well as in the basic skills and attributes of a soldier.
- Supervising unit physical fitness training and ensuring that soldiers comply with the weight and appearance standards in AR 600-9 and AR 670-1.
- Teaching soldiers the history of the Army, to include military customs, courtesies and traditions.
- Caring for individual soldiers and their families both on and off duty.
- Teaching soldiers the mission of the unit and developing individual training programs to support the mission.
- Accounting for and maintaining individual arms and equipment of enlisted soldiers and unit equipment under their control.
- Administering and monitoring the NCO professional development program and other unit training programs.
- Achieving and maintaining Army Values.
- Advising the commander on rewards and punishment for enlisted soldiers.

2-56. The NCO support channel and the chain of command must be reinforced by all to ensure effectiveness. It is the channel of communication and supervision from the command sergeant major to the most junior enlisted soldier in the unit. Commanders may further specify responsibilities and authority of their NCOs to their staffs and subordinates. Your contribution to the NCO support channel ensures its overall success.

“...the routine daily business of the Army is noncommissioned officer business, that is to say, execution of established policies and standards pertaining to the performance, training and conduct of enlisted personnel is the responsibility of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps. The establishment of those policies and standards is the responsibility of the officer corps.”

NCO RANKS

SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY

2-57. Established in 1966, the Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA) is the senior enlisted position of the Army. The sergeant major in this position serves as the senior enlisted advisor and consultant to the Chief of Staff of the Army. The SMA provides information on problems affecting enlisted personnel and proposes solutions to these problems concerning standards, professional development, growth and advancement of NCOs, morale, training, pay, promotions and quality of life for soldiers and family members.

2-58. Using command information channels, the SMA keeps soldiers current on important NCO issues and through the public media informs the American people of the Army mission, soldiers' accomplishments and future enlisted trends. The SMA directs NCO support channel activities through the major commands' CSMs by using written and verbal communications. The SMA also presents the enlisted viewpoint to Congress, DA boards and committees, meets with military and civilian organizations to discuss enlisted affairs, and receives and represents Army enlisted personnel at appropriate ceremonies.

COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR AND SERGEANT MAJOR

2-59. The Command Sergeant Major is the senior NCO of the command at battalion or higher levels. The CSM carries out policies and standards on performance, training, appearance and conduct of enlisted personnel. The CSM gives advice and initiates recommendations to the commander and staff in matters pertaining to enlisted personnel. A unit, installation, or higher headquarters CSM directs the activities of that NCO support channel. The support channel functions orally through the CSMs or first sergeant's call and normally does not involve written instruction. The CSM administers the unit Noncommissioned Officer Development Program (NCODP), normally through written directives and the NCO support channel. As the senior NCO of the command, the CSM is the training professional within the unit, overseeing and driving the entire training program. The CSM assists the commander in determining leader tasks and training for NCOs.

2-60. The CSM and commander jointly coordinate and develop the unit's Mission Essential Task List (METL) and individual training tasks to create a team approach to battle-focused training. The CSM and NCO leaders then select the specific individual tasks, which support each collective task to be trained during this same period. CSMs use command information channels to inform, express concerns on enlisted issues and build esprit. They also represent the commander at military and civilian functions to maintain good community relations.

2-61. The Sergeant Major is often the key enlisted member of the staff elements at battalion and higher levels. The sergeant major's experience and ability are equal to that of the unit command sergeant major, but leadership influence is generally limited to those directly under their charge. The sergeant major is a subject matter expert in his technical field, primary advisor on policy development, analytical reviewer of regulatory guidance and often fulfills the duties of the command sergeant major in his absence. Sergeants major also serve in non-staff and leadership positions such as Special Forces Team Sergeant Major, instructor at the Sergeants Major Academy or as the State Senior Enlisted Advisor.

Colors and Color Guards

Flags are almost as old as civilization itself. Imperial Egypt and the armies of Babylon and Assyria followed the colors of their kings. Ancient texts mention banners and standards. The flag that identified nations usually were based on the personal or family heraldry of the reigning monarch. As autocracies faded or disappeared, dynastic colors were no longer suitable and national flags came into being. These national flags such as the Union Jack of Great Britain, the Tricolor of France and the Stars and Stripes are relatively new to history. When the struggle for independence united the colonies, there grew a desire for a single flag to represent the new Nation. The first flag borne by our Army representing the 13 colonies was the grand union flag. It was raised over the Continental Army at Cambridge, Massachusetts, on 2 January 1776. The Stars and Stripes as we now know it was born on 14 June 1777.

The flags carried by Color-bearing units are called the national and organizational colors. The Colors may be carried in any formation in which two or more company honor guards or representative elements of a command participate. The Command Sergeant Major is responsible for the safeguarding, care and display of the organizational color. He is also responsible for the selection, training and performance of the Color bearers and Color guards.

The honorary position for the CSM is two steps to the rear and centered on the Color guard.

Because of the importance and visibility of the task, it is an honor to be a member of the Color guard. The detail may consist of three to eight soldiers, usually NCOs. The senior (Color) sergeant carries the National Color and commands the Color guard unless a person is designated as the Color sergeant. The Color sergeant gives the necessary commands for the movements and for rendering honors. The most important aspect of the selection, training and performance of the Color guard is the training. Training requires precision in drills, manual of arms, customs and courtesies and wear and appearance of uniforms and insignia.

A well trained color guard at the front of unit's formation signifies a sense of teamwork, confidence, pride, alertness, attention to detail, esprit de corps and discipline. The Color Guard detail should perform its functions as much as possible in accordance with ARs 600-25, 670-1 and 840-10 and FM 22-5.

FIRST SERGEANT AND MASTER SERGEANT

2-62. The First Sergeant is the senior NCO in companies, batteries and troops. The position of first sergeant is similar to that of the CSM in importance, responsibility and prestige. As far back as the Revolutionary War period, first sergeants have enforced discipline, fostered loyalty and commitment in their soldiers, maintained duty rosters and made morning reports to their company commanders. Since today's first sergeants maintain daily contact with and are responsible for training and ensuring the health and welfare of all of the unit's soldiers and families, this position requires extraordinary leadership and professional competence.

2-63. First sergeants hold formations, instruct platoon sergeants and assist the commander in daily unit operations. Though first sergeants supervise routine administrative duties their principle duty is training soldiers. The CSM, first sergeant and other key NCOs, must understand the organization's collective mission essential tasks during METL-based training. Through NCO development programs, performance counseling and other guidance, first sergeants are the Army's most important mentors in developing subordinate NCOs.

2-64. The Master Sergeant serves as the principle NCO in staff elements at battalion or higher levels. Although not charged with the enormous leadership responsibilities of the first sergeant, the master sergeant dispatches leadership and executes other duties with the same professionalism as the first sergeant.

PLATOON SERGEANT AND SERGEANT FIRST CLASS

2-65. While "Platoon Sergeant" is a duty position, not a rank, the platoon sergeant is the primary assistant and advisor to the platoon leader, with the responsibility of training and caring for soldiers. The platoon sergeant helps the commander to train the platoon leader and in that regard has an enormous effect on how that young officer perceives NCOs for the rest of his career. The platoon sergeant takes charge of the platoon in the absence of the platoon leader. As the lowest level senior NCO involved in the company METL, platoon sergeants teach collective and individual tasks to soldiers in their squads, crews or equivalent small units.

2-66. The Sergeant First Class (SFC), may serve in a position subordinate to the platoon sergeant or may serve as the NCO in charge (NCOIC) of the section with all the attendant responsibilities and duties of the platoon sergeant. A platoon sergeant or sergeant first class generally has extensive

military experience and can make accurate decisions in the best interest of the mission and the soldier.

2-67. Utilizing tough, realistic and intellectually and physically challenging performance-oriented training to excite and motivate soldiers, the platoon sergeant ensures Army standards are met and maintained. Additionally, the platoon sergeant must conduct cross training to promote critical wartime skills within the unit, evaluate the effectiveness of the platoon and provide training feedback to the commander and first sergeant during After-Action Reviews (AAR) on all unit collective training.

SQUAD, SECTION AND TEAM LEADERS

2-68. Staff Sergeants, Sergeants and Corporals are normally squad, section and team leaders and are a critical link in the NCO channel. These NCOs live and work with their soldiers every day and are responsible for their health, welfare and safety. These squad, section and team leaders ensure that their soldiers meet standards in personal appearance and teach them to maintain and account for their individual and unit equipment and property. The NCO enforces standards and develops and trains soldiers daily in MOS skills and unit missions.

“NCOs should make it a point to drop by the barracks on and off duty to visit soldiers and check on their welfare.”

SMA Jack L. Tilley

2-69. The NCO teaches individual and collective training, develops unit cohesion, fosters the values of loyalty and commitment and builds spirit and confidence. The NCO evaluates performance oriented training and through coaching and counseling grooms young soldiers for future positions of increased responsibility. Squad, section and team leaders teach everything from the making of sound and timely decisions to physical training to ethics and values. You, corporals and sergeants, are the basic trainer of today's soldiers.

YOU ARE A NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER

2-70. You as an NCO have a tough, demanding, but very rewarding job. The soldiers you lead are the heart of the Army. You lead soldiers at the action level where the important day-to-day fundamental work of the Army is mission oriented. Because you live and work directly with and among soldiers, you have the best opportunity to know them as they really are. You are the first to identify and teach soldiers how to best use their strengths and help them detect and overcome their shortcomings. You are in the best position to secure the trust and confidence of soldiers by leading by example. You have the advantage of a deeper understanding of soldier behavior because you were promoted directly from the ranks that you now lead and serve. Your soldiers will challenge you each and every day and you will be rewarded by the respect

they hold for your ability as a leader. You will be successful as they follow your leadership in the difficult business of getting ready to fight and win our Nation's wars.

